


RESEARCH ARTICLE	 <b>The Impact of the Work Environment on the Job Performance of Nurses in Public Health Institutions: A Case Study of the Public Institution for Community Health, Ouled Mimoun (model)</b>
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<b>Keywords</b>	Job performance; Work environment; Socio-professional relationships; Human resources; Organisation; Institution
<b>Abstract</b> This study aims to examine the key environmental factors and socio-professional dynamics that directly or indirectly affect the job performance of nurses working at the Public Institution for Community Health in Ouled Mimoun, located in the Tlemcen province. In the context of ongoing challenges facing Algeria's healthcare system—including workforce shortages and issues related to the quality of healthcare services—the study highlights the importance of professional competence, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility among healthcare staff. By focusing on the institutional and organisational environment, this research provides insights into improving job performance and, ultimately, the delivery of health services.	
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## General Introduction

### Preface

Health, in its most comprehensive sense, is a key determinant of an individual's quality of life and a fundamental indicator of human development. In Algeria, considerable efforts have been made by the state to enhance the health status of its population. These include the allocation of financial resources, investment in modern medical technologies, and legislative reforms to improve the regulation of healthcare services in both public hospitals and private clinics. Furthermore, national development programs in public health have been updated to promote equitable access to healthcare and to ensure social justice, free from discrimination or exclusion.

Despite these initiatives, the Algerian healthcare system continues to face persistent challenges. Public dissatisfaction with the quality and availability of healthcare services suggests that structural and operational barriers hinder the effective

implementation of the country's health programs. These impediments not only compromise service delivery but may also reflect deeper systemic dysfunctions within the healthcare sector.

### Problem Statement

While numerous factors may impact the provision of healthcare services in Algeria, our concern centers on the lived experiences of healthcare personnel, particularly in public institutions. Drawing on our position as professionals within the healthcare system (paramedical staff), and based on firsthand observation of daily operations in public health institutions, it became imperative to examine the obstacles that affect the job performance of healthcare workers. These challenges are often embedded in the work environment and are likely to influence the overall quality of healthcare service delivery.

This study focuses on the conditions affecting nurses within public hospitals—arguably one of the most critical components of human resources in the healthcare sector. We began with a preliminary inquiry into the constraints hindering nurses' job performance, aiming to identify both physical and psychological burdens experienced in the execution of their duties.

Following an exploratory investigation and a review of relevant empirical and theoretical literature, the central research question was articulated as follows:

**How does the work environment affect the job performance of nurses at the Ouled Mimoun Public Community Health Institution (Tlemcen)?**

### Hypotheses

To address this research question, we proposed the following general hypothesis: An unbalanced and dysfunctional work environment negatively impacts the job performance of nurses.

From this, two subsidiary hypotheses were developed:

- **H1:** The availability of work-related resources (such as treatment tools, diagnostic equipment, and pharmaceuticals), as well as the organizational structure, significantly affects nurses' job performance.
- **H2:** Social and professional relationships within the institution—including interactions among colleagues, with supervisors, and with patients and their families—also exert a significant influence on performance outcomes.

**Theoretical Framework.** This study adopts a sociological perspective grounded in Robert K. Merton's theory of functional analysis, particularly his concept of "dysfunctions" within organizational structures. Merton emphasized the role of systemic failure in the inability of certain social institutions to fulfill their intended roles, which consequently undermines social needs and expectations (Al-Hassani, 1983). By applying this theoretical lens, we seek to identify the internal and external organizational factors that contribute to the deterioration of functional performance among healthcare professionals.

B. Terminology:

### The Concept of Institution

Talcott Parsons conceptualizes the institution as a form of social organization fundamentally oriented toward the achievement of specific goals. According to Parsons, institutions differ from other social units in that their objectives are pre-established, and they function as structured systems facilitating organized interaction among individuals to attain those aims (Gouri, 2010, p. 8). Thus, the institution is defined not merely by its social character but also by the purposiveness embedded in its design and operation.

Robert Merton advances this view by emphasizing the formal and rational nature of institutional structures. He argues that organizational structures consist of hierarchical positions that are systematically ordered and interdependent. Each position carries specific duties, privileges, and responsibilities defined by formalized rules and procedures. For Merton, such arrangements ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions by coordinating activity through clearly defined roles (Gouri, 2010, p. 8). His analysis highlights how order and organizational performance are maintained through rational authority and hierarchical differentiation.

In a complementary perspective, Lemoigne posits that institutions exist through the conceptual models or representations we create of them. According to him, the reality of any institution is inherently tied to the mental constructs or systemic "maps" designed to represent it. Therefore, a unique model corresponds to each institution, and the definition of an institution is determined by the specificity of that model (Gouri, 2010, p. 8). This suggests that institutional identity is not uniform but differentiated by its distinct structural and functional configuration.

From a more general standpoint, the *Comprehensive Dictionary of Meanings* defines an institution as an entity established for a specific purpose or for the public good. It is characterized by the possession of human and material resources, a clear operational domain, and the capacity to implement specialized functions. Institutions may operate as public bodies or private enterprises, but their distinguishing feature lies in their capacity for structured functionality and targeted intervention (Lavi, accessed 20/04/2021).

Drawing from these definitions, an institution can be described as a formally structured social system guided by rational planning and intended to achieve predetermined objectives. It operates within a legal and administrative framework, possesses its own human and material capital, and adapts to its socio-environmental context to fulfill public or private mandates. Its uniqueness is derived from the specificity of its functional model, which distinguishes it from other institutional entities.

## The Concept of Organization

**A. Linguistic Perspective.** The term *organization* originates from the verb "to organize," which implies arranging, ordering, or assembling elements into a cohesive system. Classical Arabic sources liken organization to the act of stringing pearls, forming a unified and ordered whole. The concept implies both orderliness and systemic arrangement across various domains, whether in speech, objects, or administrative systems.

**B. Terminological Definition.** In institutional theory, organization refers to the distribution of roles, responsibilities, and authority among individuals within an institutional framework. Aribat (2008, p. 17) defines organization as the process of integrating human and material resources through a formal structure that clarifies the hierarchy of authority and delineates specific tasks. Organization, therefore, serves as a mechanism for role allocation and the coordination of resources to achieve institutional objectives.

From a managerial perspective, effective organization enables coordinated action. Alaq (2008, p. 29) emphasizes that the organizational process provides the necessary infrastructure for achieving institutional goals through collective effort. Managers must define roles, delegate authority, and structure reporting lines to ensure clarity and operational cohesion. Subordinates, in turn, must understand their responsibilities, their place within the structure, and the communication channels that govern institutional workflow. Thus, organization serves not only as an administrative tool but also as a dynamic framework for optimizing institutional performance and productivity.

## The Concept of the Work Environment

The work environment—or institutional environment—is composed of internal and external factors that influence the functioning of an organization. John Piardetri defines it as "the agreed source of influences and pressures that govern the organisation's decisions, or the power play between the organisation and its competitors and other actors influencing its

activities” (Al-Deen, 2017, p. 12). This conceptualization underscores the role of external stakeholders and systemic forces—economic, political, or social—in shaping organizational choices and strategies.

Lohman Ortega and colleagues adopt a similar view, framing the environment as an active agent in the institutional ecosystem rather than a passive backdrop. They argue that the environment interacts dynamically with institutional goals, necessitating continuous negotiation and the development of organizational competencies to ensure institutional sustainability (Al-Deen, 2017, p. 13).

In a more economic sense, Philip Goulmick views the environment as the set of economic actors surrounding the institution, engaging in transactions that create obligations and entitlements. These actors influence the institution's performance and strategic behavior through a series of economic exchanges (Al-Deen, 2017, p. 13).

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that the work environment is multifaceted, comprising both tangible and intangible elements. It includes actors and forces—whether competitive, regulatory, or collaborative—that exert influence over institutional activities. The environment not only shapes decision-making processes but also requires continuous adaptation to changing circumstances.

Fiancourt contributes a dynamic understanding of the institutional environment, describing it as the totality of human activities and external factors that exert direct or indirect influence over organizational behavior, across both short- and long-term horizons (Al-Deen, 2017, p. 13). Thus, the work environment is best understood as a complex interplay of internal structures and external conditions, capable of exerting both pressure and support in shaping institutional trajectories.

## 5. Functional Performance of Human Resources

### A. Linguistic Foundation

The term *performance* originates from the Latin word *performare*, meaning “to give something its complete form.” This etymology underpins the contemporary English usage, where *performance* signifies both the accomplishment of work and the manner in which an organization achieves its objectives (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86). In institutional contexts, performance encompasses the implementation of methods and strategies tailored to the realization of specific organizational goals.

### B. Conceptual Definitions

Scholars have conceptualized performance in two primary ways. One school of thought defines it as the execution of the various tasks and responsibilities assigned to individuals within an organization. According to this view, performance is the sum of the activities carried out by an individual in the course of their duties.

Conversely, a second school emphasizes *how* these tasks are executed—i.e., the method, efficiency, and resourcefulness demonstrated by the employee in completing their assignments. Performance, in this perspective, is not merely about task completion but about the effective use of available tools, methods, and time to achieve optimal outcomes (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86).

Chevalier and colleagues further argue that while organizational productivity is influenced by multiple factors such as capital and knowledge, performance is directly linked to labor—the human element. Hence, job performance varies according to each worker’s capabilities and the inherent nature of their duties (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86). This underscores the centrality of human resources as drivers of institutional output and efficiency.

### *C. Dimensions of Job Performance*

Arvis (2018, p. 486) identifies several key dimensions of job performance:

- **Amount of Effort Expended:** This refers to the physical and mental energy invested by an individual over a defined time period. It represents the quantitative dimension of performance and can be measured biologically (e.g., caloric expenditure).
- **Effort Type:** Unlike the amount of effort, this dimension emphasizes the *quality* rather than the speed or volume of work. For instance, two individuals may complete similar tasks with different methods, efforts, or speeds, but yield comparable outcomes in terms of quality.
- **Performance Style:** This refers to the approach or technique used by individuals in executing tasks. Style reflects cognitive and personal traits such as reasoning, speed of thought, enthusiasm, determination, and problem-solving methods. It accounts for inter-individual variability in task execution.

In summary, job performance is a behavioral output shaped by physical, cognitive, and psychological attributes, manifesting in the effective and timely completion of assigned duties. It represents an interaction between motivation, ability, and the strategic use of resources, distinguishing it from ordinary behavioral routines.

## **II. Methodological Framework**

### *1. Overview of the Study Context*

This study was conducted at the Public Community Health Institution of Ouled Mimoun, located in the Tlemcen province of Algeria. The institution was established under Executive Decree No. 07-140 dated 2 Jumada I 1428 (19 May 2007), which regulates the structure and function of public hospitals and community health institutions (Official Gazette, 2007, p. 10).

As defined by this decree, the institution is a legally autonomous public entity with administrative status and financial independence. It is overseen by the regional governor and comprises a network of multi-service clinics and treatment centers designed to serve a geographically defined population. The institution is aligned with national healthcare policy and aims to improve the accessibility and quality of care for the local population.

### *2. Study Population*

The institution employs approximately 326 nurses across various medical departments. These departments are coordinated by an administrative unit composed of a director, deputy directors of four sub-departments, support staff, and technical personnel. The medical team includes about 50 general practitioners, 7 specialists, 23 midwives, and a range of support workers.

### *3. Sampling Strategy*

For the purposes of this qualitative study, a purposive (non-probability) sample of 10 nurses was selected from the institution. This sampling technique was chosen due to the researcher's familiarity with the institutional context and the objective of identifying specific obstacles that impact job performance.

Interviews were conducted based on two thematic areas: (1) material obstacles (e.g., lack of resources, equipment, medications), and (2) socio-professional challenges (e.g., relationships with colleagues, superiors, patients, and families). The purposive sampling method was employed due to its relevance for exploratory studies where the goal is to gain in-depth insights rather than statistical generalization (Al-Samrai, 2013, p. 126; Mohammed, 2017, p. 315).

This targeted approach allowed the researcher to select participants who are directly engaged in nursing services and can offer firsthand accounts of the challenges encountered in their daily work environment.

#### 4. Methodological Approach

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, aligning with Ingersoll's (2004, p. 98) definition of methodology as "an organized set of procedures aimed at achieving a goal." Qualitative methods prioritize understanding phenomena through the interpretation of narratives, experiences, and behaviors.

Such an approach is appropriate when the research focuses on phenomena that cannot be easily quantified but are critical to organizational functionality—such as perceptions of work conditions and interpersonal dynamics (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 101).

Within the qualitative paradigm, the **descriptive method** was adopted. As Darwish (2018, p. 66) notes, this method aims to gather and interpret factual data concerning a specific phenomenon, with an emphasis on accurate description and contextual analysis. The descriptive method, therefore, provides the empirical and interpretative tools necessary to identify and analyze the barriers to job performance experienced by nurses at the Public Community Health Institution in Ouled Mimoun.

#### 5. Functional Performance of Human Resources

##### A. Language

The term "performance" originates from the Latin word *performare*, meaning "to give something its complete form." This etymological root reflects the modern understanding of "performance" as the accomplishment of work or the manner in which an organisation achieves its objectives (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86). Each organisation defines specific goals and relies on its leadership to identify effective methods and tools for achieving them. These efforts collectively fall under the domain of performance.

##### B. Terminology

The concept of performance has been interpreted in multiple ways. Some scholars define it as "the individual carrying out the various tasks that constitute their job." Others emphasise the manner in which tasks are executed during production processes, utilising available resources to meet both quantitative and qualitative targets aligned with predefined production programmes (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86). This dual perspective delineates two schools of thought:

1. **Task-oriented view:** Performance is the sum of assigned tasks and their execution.
2. **Method-oriented view:** Performance is the method by which tasks are executed, reflecting how well individuals utilise available tools and resources to enhance productivity.

Supporting the latter view, Chevalier and colleagues argue that organisational output stems from various inputs—including capital and knowledge—yet it is labour that directly determines performance. Hence, job performance is fundamentally tied to the capabilities and nature of the tasks assigned to human resources (Mezhoud, 2001, p. 86).

##### C. Dimensions of Job Performance (Arvis, 2018, p. 486)

- **Amount of effort expended:** This reflects the physical or mental energy invested during a specific period. It can be quantified biologically by caloric expenditure associated with task completion.
- **Effort expended:** Unlike the quantitative focus of the previous dimension, this pertains to the *quality* of work. It evaluates the nature and complexity of tasks, independent of time or energy consumption.

- **Performance style:** This refers to the approach or method used in task execution. It varies among individuals based on cognitive abilities, personality traits, decision-making styles, and motivation.

**Summary:** Job performance results from the direct application of an individual's physical, mental, and psychological abilities in task execution. It reflects a dynamic interplay between ability, motivation, and the optimal use of resources, shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

## II. Methodological Procedures

### 1. Study Site: Ouled Mimoun Public Community Health Institution

Established under Executive Decree No. 07-140 dated 19 May 2007 (Official Gazette, 2007, p. 10), the Ouled Mimoun Public Community Health Institution operates under the authority of the local governor. It comprises multiservice clinics and treatment rooms aimed at delivering essential healthcare services in line with Algeria's national health policy.

### 2. Study Population

The institution employs approximately 326 nurses, allocated across various departments according to healthcare needs. The administrative structure includes a director, four sub-directors, administrative personnel, 50 general practitioners, 7 specialists, 23 midwives, and additional support staff.

### 3. Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling method was adopted to select ten nurses of both sexes. This non-probabilistic approach was chosen based on the researchers' experience in the healthcare field, enabling direct access to individuals most representative of the study focus (Al-Samrai, 2013, p. 126; Mohammed, 2017, p. 315). The sample was subjected to interviews structured around two main themes: material constraints and socio-professional relationship challenges.

### 4. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative methodology, appropriate for understanding complex social phenomena (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 98). Qualitative approaches, particularly descriptive research, allow for in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Darwish, 2018, p. 66). The descriptive method seeks to answer key questions about the current state of a phenomenon, its origins, relationships with other variables, and the implications of its study (Mohammed, 2017, p. 312).

### 5. Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interviews were utilised to collect qualitative data. This technique fosters a deeper understanding of participants' motivations and experiences, particularly in under-researched areas. It enables researchers to engage participants in open dialogue while guiding the discussion to relevant themes (Ingersoll, 2004, p. 197). This method was deemed effective in uncovering nuanced barriers to nurses' performance.

## III. Study Results

### 1. Material Conditions Affecting Nurses' Performance

**A. Health Infrastructure and Working Environment.** Nurses face challenges linked to the poor design and maintenance of healthcare facilities. These inadequacies stem from a lack of technical oversight, planning that neglects community-specific needs, and an absence of innovation in health infrastructure. Furthermore, issues such as nepotism and the marginalisation of qualified professionals hinder institutional progress.

**B. Therapeutic Resources and Hygiene Standards.** All respondents agreed that the availability of medicines and equipment significantly impacts their performance and morale. Conversely, shortages lead to frustration and diminished motivation. The lack of cleanliness—caused by inadequate oversight of cleaning staff and insufficient training—further exacerbates performance issues, compromising patient care and safety.

**C. Suitability of Shift Work.** Although nurses generally accept shift work, dissatisfaction stems from structural inefficiencies, equipment breakdowns, and resource fluctuations, all of which negatively impact morale and effectiveness.

## *2. Interpersonal Work Relationships*

**A. Teamwork Among Nurses.** Camaraderie and collaboration among nurses enhance morale and contribute positively to job performance.

**B. Relationship with Supervisors.** Participants reported poor and inequitable relationships with superiors, often driven by favouritism. This undermines merit-based advancement and discourages professional excellence.

**C. Patient and Companion Interactions.** Respondents highlighted safety concerns due to the lack of security personnel and disruptive behaviour by patients or their companions. This creates a stressful and unsafe work environment that hampers nurses' ability to perform effectively.

## **Conclusion**

An optimal working environment in healthcare is predicated on both material and moral factors. However, Algerian public health institutions face multiple systemic challenges:

- **Material Obstacles:**
  - Substandard infrastructure not aligned with medical or cultural standards.
  - Absence of predictive and culturally attuned health facility planning.
  - Lack of innovation and accountability in facility management.
  - Inconsistent availability of essential medicines and tools.
  - Inadequate hygiene due to poor staff organisation and lack of training.
- **Socio-Professional Obstacles:**
  - Poor managerial practices and favouritism impede professional development.
  - Inadequate security exposes nurses to risks, leading to compromised service delivery.

These issues collectively hinder the functional performance of nurses, thereby affecting the quality of care provided to patients. Addressing them requires systemic reform, investment in human resources, and a shift towards transparent, merit-based institutional cultures.

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